



May 31, 2012

Office of Environmental Information (OEI) Docket (Mail Code 2822T)
Docket #EPA-HQ-ORD-2012-0276
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

**Re: Request for 120-Day Extension of Period for Public Comment on EPA's Draft
"Assessment of Potential Mining Impacts on Salmon Ecosystems of Bristol Bay,
Alaska"**

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Mining Association (NMA) requests a 120-day extension of the public comment period for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) draft "Assessment of Potential Mining Impacts on Salmon Ecosystems of Bristol Bay, Alaska" (Bristol Bay Assessment). 77 Fed. Reg. 31353 (May 25, 2012). NMA is a national trade association that includes the producers of most of the nation's coal, metals, industrial and agricultural minerals; the manufacturers of mining and mineral processing machinery, equipment and supplies; and the engineering and consulting firms, financial institutions and other firms serving the mining industry.

As NMA has previously noted, the Bristol Bay Assessment is a precedent-setting initiative that will directly impact not only NMA members, but all other companies performing activities requiring a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit as well. The three-volume assessment includes more than 1,000 pages and cites to approximately 2,000 additional documents upon which EPA and its contractors relied. The assessment also involves complex questions of state and federal law in addition to the scientific issues raised in EPA's analysis.

EPA has rushed through this large-scale, complex scientific assessment, and has done so pursuant to questionable legal authority. Such haste calls into question the validity of EPA's findings, and the public should have adequate time to review EPA's work and conclusions. Additionally, the peer review members that EPA is currently empanelling to study the Bristol Bay Assessment will be meeting throughout the fall and releasing their findings in or around September. The public should be given the opportunity to access and assess any information considered by the panel as well as the conclusions that the panel reaches. The current public comment deadline of July 23rd would obviously preclude such a vital opportunity.

Based on the voluminous record at issue and the important legal and scientific questions at stake, it is essential that EPA expand the public comment period to allow additional time for review and analysis. The current 60-day period is completely inadequate to provide the public with a meaningful opportunity to comment on the Bristol Bay Assessment, and NMA requests that EPA extend the period by 120 days, until Nov. 20, 2012. NMA also requests that EPA make publicly available the data materials cited throughout and relied upon in developing the Bristol Bay Assessment and its appendices so as to ensure the opportunity for proper public involvement and critique.

Sincerely,



Amanda E. Aspatore
Assistant General Counsel
National Mining Association